

School Readiness



OBJECTIVE

A state-funded initiative (jointly funded by the Connecticut Department of Education and Department of Social Services and administered by the Department of Education) that develops a network of school readiness programs to:

- Significantly increase the number of spaces in accredited and/or approved programs for young children to provide access to high quality school readiness programs;
- Significantly increase the number of full-day, full-year spaces to meet family needs; and
- Shared cost for school readiness and child-care programs among the state and its various agencies, the communities and families.



OVERVIEW

Established in 1997 under P.A. 97-259, An Act Concerning School Readiness and Child Day Care and encoded in the CT General Statutes C.G.S. 10-16p - 10-16u, the legislation established a grant program to provide spaces in accredited or approved school readiness programs for eligible children in priority school districts and competitive grant municipalities.

Priority School Districts

These districts receive a grant allocation for spaces for eligible children who reside in priority school districts, that is based on a formula that uses the average number of enrolled kindergartners in each priority school district for the three years prior to the year the grant is to be paid and the ratio of the average percentage of free and reduced meals for all severe-need schools in the district.

Competitive Grant Municipalities

This is a competitive grants program for spaces for eligible children who reside in an area served by a priority school (severe need school) or in a town ranked 1 to 50 when all towns are ranked in ascending order according to town wealth. Each eligible municipality or regional school system where such a school is located may apply for a grant in an amount not to exceed \$107,000 dollars.

Grant awards are made annually to eligible communities, for a period of five years. The chief elected official and the superintendent of schools jointly submit a plan for the expenditure of the funds and the responses to the local request for proposals process.

To review the RFP for School Readiness for Priority School Districts or Competitive Grants, please refer to the RFP button on the School Readiness web page.



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SCHOOL READINESS COUNCIL

The chief elected official and the superintendent of schools jointly appoint and convene a school readiness council with the responsibility of making recommendations on issues relating to school readiness including the application for school readiness grants. The school readiness council is composed of the chief elected official or designee, the superintendent of schools or management level staff person, parents, a representative of a community health care provider, representatives from programs such as Head Start, family resource centers, nonprofit and for profit child-care centers, group day-care homes, pre-kindergarten and nursery schools and family day care home providers representatives from the community who provide services to children.

ELIGIBILITY

Resident children in an eligible community who are ages 3 and 4 years of age and children age 5 years of age who are not eligible to enroll in school may enroll in a school readiness program. Under C.G.S. Sec 10-16t, a school readiness council may elect to reserve 5 percent of its spaces for 5-year-olds eligible to enroll in school provided they have been in the program for one year and the parent or legal guardian, the school readiness provider and local or regional school district agree that the child is not ready for kindergarten and the parent signs the public school option form exempting his/her child from attendance at the public school.

At least 60 percent of the children enrolled must be at or below 75 percent of the State Median Income.

PROGRAM TYPES

Full-day/Full-year Programs

Those programs providing services for 10 hours per day for 52 weeks per year. Reimbursed at \$8,346 per child.

School-Day/School-Year Programs

Those programs providing services for 7 hours per day for 180 consecutive days. Reimbursed at \$6,000 per child.

Part-Day/Part-Year Programs

Those programs providing services for at least 2.5 hours per day for 180 consecutive days. Reimbursed at \$4,500 per child.

Extended-Day Programs

Those programs who provide services that extend the hours, days and/or weeks of programming for children who are in an existing part time program not funded by School Readiness dollars, in order to provide those children with a full time program of 10 hours per day for 52 weeks. Reimbursed at \$2,772 per child.

All programs must charge parent fees, based on the DSS School Readiness Sliding Fee Scale, and/or use the child-care subsidy certificates from the Care4Kids program. School Readiness Councils may exempt part-day programs from charging parent fees. Exempt programs are not eligible for CCAP.



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REQUIREMENTS

In the Priority School Districts, the school readiness council shall issue a local request for proposals to identify and fund local early care and education providers to provide school readiness and child care slots. After a review by the council to ensure that the proposals address all the requirements of the school readiness legislation, the school readiness council shall, within their allocation, purchase capacity in public schools, for profit and non profit early childhood programs, Head Start and state funded day care programs. All programs must either be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or complete that process within three years of being awarded the funds, or be approved by Head Start, or meet the criteria established by the Commissioner of Education which is known as the *Connecticut Standards for Preschool and Readiness Programs*. At least 60 percent of the slots in a priority community must be full-day/full-year slots.

Funded competitive grant municipalities must provide a minimum of 15 full-day, full-year slots for children in the town enrollment area. A town or school readiness council may file a waiver application to the Department of Education for the purpose of seeking approval of a school readiness schedule that varies from the minimum hours and number of days and maximizes available dollars to serve more children or address community needs. The school readiness council may purchase capacity in early care and education programs such as public schools, for profit and non profit early childhood programs, Head Start and state funded day care programs. These programs must be accredited by NAEYC or complete the process within three years of being awarded the funds, or be approved by Head Start or meet the criteria established by the Commissioner of Education which is known as the *Connecticut Standards for Preschool and Readiness Programs*.

QUALITY COMPONENTS

The legislation has identified specific requirements for school readiness programs as part of the continuum of services in quality programs that meet the needs of children and families. These indicators include:

- A plan for collaboration with other community programs and services, including public libraries and for coordination of resources in order to facilitate full-day and year-round child-care and education programs for children of working parents and parents in education or training programs;
- Parent involvement, parenting education and outreach;
- Referrals for health service, including referrals for appropriate immunizations and screenings;
- Nutrition services;
- Referrals to family literacy programs that incorporate adult basic education and provide for the promotion of literacy through access to public library services;
- Admission policies that promote enrollment of children from different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds and from other communities;
- A plan of transition for participating children from the school readiness program to kindergarten and provide for the transfer of records from the program to the kindergarten program;
- A plan for professional development for staff;
- A sliding fee scale for families participating in the program;
- An annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the program; and
- A plan to ensure that children with disabilities are integrated into programs with children who are not disabled.

FY 2009 GRANTS

Priority Communities	Grant Amount	Competitive Grant Municipalities	Grant Amount
Ansonia	\$ 966,534	Andover	\$ 107,000
Bloomfield	704,970	Ashford	107,000
Bridgeport	10,621,769	Branford	53,500
Bristol	2,091,188	Brooklyn	107,000
Danbury	2,844,192	Canterbury	107,000
East Hartford	2,173,736	Chaplin	107,000
Hartford	11,879,978	Colchester	107,000
Meriden	2,586,810	Coventry	107,000
Middletown	1,787,188	Derby	107,000
New Britain	3,986,374	Eastford	107,000
New Haven	7,751,803	East Haven	107,000
New London	1,067,792	Enfield	107,000
Norwalk	3,943,507	Greenwich	107,000
Norwich	1,684,538	Griswold	107,000
Putnam	343,882	Groton	107,000
Stamford	3,751,563	Hamden	107,000
Waterbury	9,484,251	Hampton	107,000
West Haven	1,635,906	Killingly	107,000
Windham	1,149,524	Lebanon	107,000
		Ledyard	107,000
		Lisbon	107,000
Total	\$ 70,455,505	Manchester	107,000
		Mansfield	107,000
		Milford	107,000
		Naugatuck	107,000
		North Canaan	107,000
		Plainfield	107,000
		Plymouth	107,000
		Preston	107,000
		Scotland	107,000
		Seymour	107,000
		Shelton	107,000
		Sprague	107,000
		Stafford	107,000
		Stratford	107,000
		Thomaston	107,000
		Thompson	107,000
		Torrington	107,000
		Vernon	107,000
		Voluntown	107,000
		West Hartford	107,000
		Winchester	107,000
		Windsor	107,000
		Wolcott	107,000
		Woodstock	107,000
		Total	\$ 4,761,500



RESOURCES

ALERTS

Policy Alerts are issued to provide guidance to councils and providers around school readiness policies and procedures.

Technical Assistance Alerts are issued to give guidance to programs on early childhood topics such as ADA and IDEA in preschools, Transition to Kindergarten, Parent Involvement and Nutrition.

CONNECTICUT HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AUTHORITY

CHEFA Bonding and Loan Program

Funds are available to early childhood programs through the CHEFA to fund renovations and construction for early care and education facilities. For information concerning funding, contact CHEFA at (860) 520-4001.

SCHOOL FACILITIES BONDING PROGRAM

Each town or regional school district may apply for a grant for a school building project. If a town or regional school district's project is a new building or expansion of an existing building for an elementary school and it includes space for a school readiness program, the percentage that the local board of education is eligible to receive shall be increased by five percentage points but shall not exceed one hundred per cent, for the portion of the building used primarily for such purpose. For further information contact the Division of Grants Management, School Facilities at (860) 713-6480.



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Supplemental grants are available to priority school districts to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of child day care programs or school readiness

programs. These grants are awarded annually and require an application from the community in response to a state Request for Proposal (RFP).



FY 2009	Amount
Ansonia	\$ 8,131
Bloomfield	10,133
Bridgeport	170,070
Bristol	31,559
Danbury	41,879
East Hartford	35,741
Hartford	189,333
Meriden	47,681
Middletown	32,009
New Britain	67,184
New Haven	136,942
New London	21,725
Norwalk	63,414
Norwich	25,375
Putnam	8,131
Stamford	82,398
Waterbury	127,274
West Haven	42,019
Windham	17,610
Total	\$ 1,158,608

LINKAGES

Accreditation Facilitation Project - <http://www.ctcharts-a-course.org/>

This statewide initiative provides intensive support to programs seeking National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation.

Connecticut Charts-A-Course - <http://www.ctcharts-a-course.org/>

Connecticut Charts-A-Course strives to bring professionalism to the field of early education and school-age care by promoting the following:

- career development ladder for individuals working in all child-care settings;
- professional recognition for training;
- training that can be applied toward a CDA credential and college credit;
- high-quality training and trainers; and
- financial assistance towards training, education and national accreditation to child-care centers.